GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
ENVIRONMENT, FORESTS AND CLIMATE CHANGE
LOK SABHA

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:2635
ANSWERED ON:02.08.2016
Depletion in Forest Area/Cover
Gawali (Patil) Ms. Bhavana;Meena Shri Arjunlal

Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT, FORESTS AND CLIMATE CHANGE be pleased to state:

(a) whether depletion in forest area and loss of forest cover has been recorded in the country;
(b) if so, the details thereof during each of the last three years, State/UT-wise along with the reasons therefor;
(c) the extent of depletion in green cover recorded in large metropolis in the country during the said period;
(d) whether builders and real estate agencies are urging the Government to allow/grant them permission to build on agricultural land, wasteland, hilly areas, coastal land and forest areas in the country; and
(e) if so, the action plan prepared by the Government to safeguard such land?

Answer

MINISTER OF STATE (INDEPENDENT CHARGE) FOR ENVIRONMENT, FOREST AND CLIMATE CHANGE

(SHRI ANIL MADHAV DAVE)

(a) & (b) Forest Survey of India, Dehradun is carrying out the assessment of forest cover of the country biennially and the findings are published in India State of Forest Report. The latest report in the series is India State of Forest Report 2015. As per this report, the total forest cover of the country is 7, 01,673 square kilometers which is 21.34% of the total geographical area of the country. There is a net increase of 3775 square kilometers in the forest cover of the country as compared with India State of Forest Report-2013. The detailed list showing forest cover and change in forest cover States/UTs wise is given in Annexure I. The reasons for decline in the forest cover State/UTs wise is given in Annexure II.

(c) As per the information provided by the Ministry of Urban Development, no information on depletion of area under forest is available. However the forest cover of metropolitan cities as per Master Plan of the city concerned is given as under:-

(i) Mumbai - 86.57 square kilometers
(ii) Delhi - 180 square kilometers
(iii) Chennai - 24 square kilometers
(iv) Kolkata - Not Available
(v) Bengaluru - 97 square kilometers
(vi) Hyderabad - 88.4 square kilometers
(vii) Jaipur (Region)-74.47 square kilometers
(viii) Chandigarh - 34.4 square kilometers

(d) Granting of permission to construct buildings comes within the purview of urban local bodies and urban development authorities which grant permission for change of land use under the provisions of Town and Country Planning Act of the respective states.

(e) The management and protection of forest area is primarily the responsibility of concerned State/UT Governments. However, there are Central Acts such as Indian Forest Act, 1927, Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980 and State Acts/Rules to deal with issues related to protection and management of forest areas. Use of forest land for non-forest purpose, including in Metropolitan Areas requires prior approval of Central Government under the Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980. Under this Act, in order to safeguard the forest land, guidelines have been issued that the Central Government will not entertain any proposal for diversion of forest land for construction of residential or dwelling houses. However, such diversion may be allowed for defence projects, construction of schools, hospitals/dispensary, community halls, cooperatives, panchayats, tiny rural industrial sheds of the Government etc., which are to be put up for the benefits to the people of that area. Such diversion should be strictly limited to the actually needed area.

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